

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PLAB, FR

SUBJECT: LABOR'S ROLE AFTER PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

1. SUMMARY. UNITED LEFT CLAIM THAT A MITTERRAND VICTORY MEANS SOCIAL PEACE WHILE ELECTION OF GISCARD MEANS SOCIAL TENSION IS OPEN TO QUESTION. TRADE UNION STREET ACTION TO CONTEST A GISCARD VICTORY IS UNLIKELY. IF POPULAR OUTPOURING FOLLOWING LEFT VICTORY GOES BEYOND STREET REJOICING, HOWEVER, UNIONS AND PARTIES OF THE LEFT WILL HAVE VITAL INTEREST IN KEEPING SITUATION UNDER CONTROL. LABOR SITUATION IN SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM WILL DEPEND UPON SUCCESS OF NEW PRESIDENT'S ECONOMIC MEASURES. INFLATION LOOMS AS MOST PRESSING CHALLENGE AND IN EVENT OF GISCARD VICTORY WILL PROVIDE UNIONS WITH LEGITIMATE ISSUE WITH WHICH TO HARASS NEW ADMINISTRATION. REAL
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UNION PRESSURE ON NEW GOVERNMENT NOT LIKELY TO BE

APPLIED UNTIL THE FALL. TIMETABLE HOWEVER COULD CHANGE IF 1974 INFLATION IS NOT COOLED DOWN OR IF GISCARD IS MALADROIT IN DEALING WITH UNIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. STANDARD REFRAIN OF THE LEFT IS THAT ELECTION OF MITTERRAND AUGURS WELL FOR SOCIAL PEACE, WHILE GISCARD'S VICTORY WOULD USHER IN PERIOD OF SOCIAL TENSION. THIS MESSAGE EXAMINES THIS ASSERTION IN LIGHT OF ORGANIZED LABOR'S ROLE IN THE IMMEDIATE POST-ELECTION PERIOD.

3. MITTERRAND HIMSELF HAS REFUSED TO USE THE ARGUMENT OF "LABOR PEACE" IN HIS CAMPAIGN. ACCORDING TO SOCIALIST SOURCE, MITTERRAND BELIEVES THAT SUCH AN ARGUMENT BLACKMAILS THE FRENCH VOTER, WHICH IS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE FRENCH PEOPLE AND TO HIMSELF.

4. OTHERS IN LEFT CAMPS, INCLUDING THE MEDIA, ARGUE THAT A SOCIAL EXPLOSION LED BY TRADE UNIONS IS POSSIBLE. THIS WOULD GIVE VENT TO RANK-AND-FILE FRUSTRATION WITH A GISCARD VICTORY, ESPECIALLY A NARROW ONE. THIS APPEARS CREDIBLE TO US ONLY, FOR EXAMPLE, IN SITUATION WHERE ELECTION RESULTS ARE CONTESTED BY ALLEGATIONS OF FRAUD OR A REVERSAL OF A MITTERRAND VICTORY IN METROPOLITAN FRANCE BY OVERSEAS RETURNS. IN SUCH A CIRCUMSTANCE ORGANIZED LABOR WOULD PLAY A KEY ROLE THROUGH STRIKES AND DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH WOULD THEN TAKE ON THE APPEARANCE OF AN ELECTORAL "THIRD ROUND". OTHERWISE, WE WOULD EXPECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE TO PREVAIL; LARGE SCALE POPULAR MOVEMENTS ARE USUALLY AN "UP-BEAT" ACTION ASSOCIATED WITH RISING EXPECTATIONS STIMULATED BY COLLECTIVE BARGAINING OR ELECTORAL VICTORIES. ELECTION SETBACKS, IF REGARDED AS LEGITIMATE, RARELY INSPIRE STREET ACTION.

5. EVEN A NARROW VICTORY CANNOT BE SECURED BY GISCARD WITHOUT WORKER VOTES. FURTHERMORE, AS RECENT EXPERIENCE IN FRANCE HAS SHOWN, POLITICAL STRIKES NO LONGER MOBILIZE RANK-AND-FILE. LABOR LEADERS OF ALL COLORS APPEAR TO HAVE LEARNED THIS LESSON.

6. IN LIGHT OF FOREGOING, WE SEE GREATER LIKELIHOOD OF WORKER EXPLOSION IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING A MITTERRAND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VICTORY. BEYOND ANTICIPATED EUPHORIC DEMONSTRATIONS IN MAJOR CITIES TO CELEBRATE THE LEFT'S VICTORY, WORKERS COMMITTEES MIGHT SPRING UP, WITH OR WITHOUT OFFICIAL TRADE UNION PARTICIPATION, PERHAPS PRODDED BY EXTREME LEFT GROUPS IN PLANTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THEY WOULD ATTEMPT TO EXERCISE MANAGERIAL AUTHORITY IN THE NAME OF MAY 19 MANDATE TO STEER FRANCE TOWARDS "WORKERS MANAGEMENT". WE UNDERSTAND FROM RELIABLE SOURCE THAT

TROTSKYITES -- FEARING "BETRAYAL" BY MITTERRAND -- ARE
PLANNING SEVERAL PLANT SEIZURES, SIMILAR TO LIP AFFAIR
LAST SUMMER, TO FORCE THE HAND OF THE LEFT ESTABLISHMENT
IN THIS CONNECTION, THE GREAT WAVES OF STRIKES AND
DEMONSTRATIONS OF 1936 FOLLOWED RATHER THAN PRECEDED THE
ELECTIONS WHICH BROUGHT THE POPULAR FRONT TO POWER.

7. ALTHOUGH THE CGT, PARTIES OF THE LEFT, AND MITTERRAND
HIMSELF, WOULD TRY TO CONTAIN SUCH SPONTANEOUS RANK-
AND-FILE OUTBURSTS, A MITTERRAND VICTORY WOULD NEVERTHE-
LESS BREATHE A NEW MOOD INTO THE WORKING CLASS

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WHICH WOULD ALTER TRADITIONAL PATTERNS OF LABOR-
MANAGEMENT RELATIONS AND PUT MANAGEMENT ON THE DEFENSIVE.

8. WE DOUBT THE CFDT WOULD HELP IN EFFORT TO CONTROL SUCH MASS MOVEMENTS. SINCE THESE WOULD PROBABLY BE SEEN BY CFDT AS DESIRABLE EVOLUTION TOWARDS IDEAL OF WORKERS' MANAGEMENT (AUTOGESTION), CFDT MIGHT EVEN PROVIDE ACTIVE SUPPORT, AS WELL AS THE IDEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION.

9. LEADERS OF CGT AND CFDT HAVE SPOKEN OF "A SOCIAL CONFRONTATION" IN THE EVENT OF GISCARD VICTORY BUT HAVE BEEN CAREFUL TO COUCH SUCH WARNING IN TRADE UNION, NOT POLITICAL, TERMS. CGT AND CFDT ASSUME THAT GISCARD GOVERNMENT WOULD IMPOSE AUSTERITY PROGRAM TO CURB INFLATION, WHICH BEING CLASS INSPIRED WOULD DEMAND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GREATER SACRIFICES FROM LABOR AND FROM OTHER SEGMENTS OF FRENCH SOCIETY. ACCORDINGLY, IF GISCARD DOES NOT CHECKMATE IN ADVANCE SUCH ALLEGATIONS, HE WOULD FACE A MAJOR TEST OF STRENGTH EARLY IN HIS ADMINISTRATION. SINCE FORCE OUVRIERE AND OTHER MODERATE UNIONS ARE EQUALLY OPPOSED TO PROGRAM ENTAILING UNEVEN SACRIFICES, GISCARD GOVERNMENT MUST ESTABLISH EARLY CONSULTATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNIONS.

10. MITTERRAND, ON THE OTHER HAND, WOULD START WITH SUBSTANTIAL ASSET OF TRADE UNION CONFIDENCE IN HIS LONG-TERM PROGRAM, EVEN IF HIS SHORT-TERM POLICIES FALL SHORT OF LABOR'S EXPECTATIONS. MITTERRAND HAS ALREADY LAUNCHED DISARMING IDEA OF A TRIPARTITE CONFERENCE OF LABOR, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNMENT, A LONG-STANDING CGT-CFDT DEMAND, WHICH THEY HOPE WOULD YIELD CONCESSIONS AND SYMBOLIC RECOGNITION OF LABOR'S ROLE IN FRENCH PUBLIC LIFE. GISCARD MIGHT ALSO CONCLUDE THAT SUCH A CONFERENCE CALLED PRIOR TO LABOR AGITATION WOULD SET A NEW TONE IN HIS RELATIONS WITH THE UNIONS.

11. WHILE BOTH CGT AND CFDT LEADERS HAVE WARNED THEIR MEMBERS THAT A MITTERRAND VICTORY CANNOT MEAN SATISFACTION OF ALL DEMANDS AT ONCE, THERE ARE IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO ORGANIZATIONS' RELATIONS WITH AN EVENTUAL MITTERRAND GOVERNMENT. CGT IS PREPARED TO PLAY THE TRANSMITTAL-BELT ROLE THAT TRADE UNIONS FULFILL IN SOCIALIST COUNTRIES, WHILE THE CFDT INSISTS UPON FULL AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE. ANTICIPATING AN EVENTUAL CONFLICT OF THIS NATURE WITH CGT AND A GOVERNMENT OF THE LEFT, THE CFDT LEADERS WHO STRONGLY SUPPORT "WORKER MANAGEMENT" OF PLANTS, ARE ALREADY ARGUING THAT EVEN UNDER A MITTERRAND REGIME, ECONOMIC POWER WILL REMAIN IN THE HANDS OF MANAGEMENT. THEREFORE, TRADE UNION ACTION WILL STILL BE

NEEDED TO OBTAIN RESULTS.

12. IN CONCLUSION, INFLATION WILL BE THE MOST PRESSING CHALLENGE THE 19 MAY VICTOR MUST MEET TO SECURE LABOR PEACE NEEDED FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF BROADER ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRAMS. GISCARD WILL BE HARD PUT TO ACT IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MANNER NOT SUBJECT TO UNION INTERPRETATION THAT HIS MOTIVATION IS CLASS-INSPIRED. MITTERRAND'S PROBLEM, ON THE OTHER HAND, WOULD BE TO PREVENT HIS SOCIAL PROGRAMS FROM ALIENATING THE MIDDLE-CLASS WITHOUT APPEARING TO BETRAY HIS SUPPORTERS' EXPECTATIONS WITHIN LABOR MOVEMENT. CFDT IDEALISM ABOUT QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE AND WORKER EMANCIPATION WILL REMAIN A CONSTANT SPUR REGARDLESS OF WHO IS PRESIDENT.

13. INFLATION PROVIDES RADICAL UNIONS WITH LEGITIMATE ISSUE WITH WHICH TO BEGIN HARASSING THE NEW ADMINISTRATION, ESPECIALLY GISCARD'S. HOWEVER, SUMMER VACATION PERIOD AND UNIONS' RECOGNITION, FOR PUBLIC OPINION'S SAKE, OF NEED TO GIVE NEW PRESIDENT MINIMUM "HONEYMOON" PERIOD SUGGEST THAT REAL UNION PRESSURE ON NEW ADMINISTRATION WILL NOT GAIN MOMENTUM UNTIL THE FALL. TIMETABLE, HOWEVER, MAY WELL CHANGE IF INFLATION OR STYLE OF GISCARD'S RELATIONS WITH UNIONS REINFORCES RADICAL GROUPS' VIEW OF CLASS STRUGGLE BETWEEN LEFT AND RIGHT. IRWIN

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